

EPIDEMIC HITS EMMET CO. 2,000 STRICKEN THREE DIE

That was the headline to the October 7, 1918, Monday edition of the Petoskey Evening News. With that announcement, Petoskey began what would be a long and often fatal battle with what was known as the Spanish Flu. The sub-headlines did not get much better. “Schools, theaters, churches and other gathering places in Petoskey and Harbor Springs close; Physicians unable to care for all the great number of cases. 335 pupils and 4 teachers in Petoskey Schools afflicted and Superintendent Beadle and 5 Harbor instructors are laid low; stores and shops seriously hampered; trouble started when Jackie and the Band visited here.”

The Spanish Flu, nicknamed so because King Alfonso XIII of Spain was afflicted with the illness, had already earned a deadly reputation. The flu itself resembled the common cold—fever, aching body and head, cough—and often disappeared within 3-4 days. The real danger came if the illness developed into pneumonia, meningitis, or inflammation of the ear. In that case the flu became deadly. The illness spread especially fast through the military camps throughout Europe and the United States—in Camp Custer, Battle Creek, Michigan there were 2,800 reported illnesses in one day (*The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Greatest Plague in History*; by John M. Barry). The illness was then transferred along with the platoons to each new city the soldiers entered.

Petoskey became infected when hosting a liberty bond drive to support the United States soldiers. Not only was the drive a patriotic fundraiser, but it also served as a major social event for Petoskey and a majority of the community turned out for it. On September 12, 1918, a military band, Jackie and the Band, provided entertainment as well as dancing partners for many of the local girls. One member of the band was treated for flu-like symptoms by Dr. George Nihart, who immediately came down with a mild case. Soon after the dance many young men and women became ill, hence the large number of students out of school. Nihart, who also served as the city health commissioner, quickly suggested that all unnecessary meetings be



The Cushman House Annex

(The brick portion of the hotel was used for victims of the flu)

halted to stop the spread, but it wasn't enough. Before the battle with the Spanish Flu had ended, many restrictions, including a ban on leaving Petoskey and a ban on public funerals, had been placed upon the town. All schools, churches, and unnecessary business closed down and visitors were refused admission into the hospitals in an effort to stop the virus. Dr. Engle, who took over as city health commissioner and enforced many of the restrictions, stated that he had "lost more friends than he ever knew he had in the city because of his efforts to rid the city of disease."

Petoskey was not the only area to get hit hard by the flu. Hundreds of miles away in Chicago, Dean Burns, then attending University of Chicago, worked alongside his fellow medical students to care for the ill. Chicago would lose 8,500 people to flu complications. Boston reported 81 deaths in a 24-hour period. Philadelphia suffered nearly 4,600 deaths in one week. The undertakers were overwhelmed by the amount of deaths in such a short time and were unable to keep up with the burials. According to Wikipedia, the pandemic lasted just over 2 years, infected one-third of the world's population, and caused between 50 and 100 million deaths.

Petoskey did what it could to fight the flu and keep it from spreading. William McManus volunteered the Cushman House

Annex to be used as a Red Cross emergency hospital. Inez Barton, the school nurse and head of the Red Cross military relief nursing committee, organized the hospital rooms, making sure supplies were available for immediate opening. She spent days and nights tending to the ill, only taking a break when she got sick herself. Ironically, just four months earlier Nurse Barton had organized and led a class on home care of the sick. Anyone with nursing experience was asked to volunteer and many did by visiting homes to care for the ill. Doctors traveled to neighboring towns to help those too ill to travel. Teachers spent their “free time” volunteering, while throughout the city people donated cleaning supplies and food to help the emergency hospital.

On December 27th, 1918, Petoskey citizens had reason to celebrate as the Red Cross emergency hospital closed its doors. While there were still a few families under quarantine, the worst of the flu had ended. The virus had paralyzed the town for over 2 months. While exact records for the entire community are not available, Greenwood Cemetery alone experienced a 68% burial increase from 1917 to 1918. While not every Petoskey resident suffered from the actual flu, in the closely knit community it is safe to say that every resident was in some way affected by it.

Boyne City is also in quarantine against places suffering from the influenza and yesterday several Petoskey people were told they were not wanted there. Despite the fact at least one patient suffering from the influenza was brought here for treatment. Boyne City is suffering from an epidemic of influenza all of its own. The meeting of the Charlevoix county board of supervisors to be held in Boyne City has been postponed.

Petoskey News Review
Saturday, October 26, 1918

Don't Lose Your Grip!

While grip grips Petoskey, Petoskey's grip on its sanity must not be slackened.

There is nothing to be unduly alarmed about. The epidemic which has closed our schools and theater and those of Harbor Springs is unpleasant but not fatal, unless permitted to develop into pneumonia, and even then the right treatment will usually cure. Every death at Great Lakes came after pneumonia had set in.

The closing of public places is highly commendable and should inspire hope and confidence rather than panic. As Superintendent Kalder so aptly and tersely said, "Better be safe than sorry." The old adages "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" and "A stitch in time saves nine" are equally applicable.

The malady is not proving fatal in places whose atmospheric and housing conditions are as good as in Petoskey, and if due care is exercised our death rate hardly will be increased. The records show that we always have had occasional deaths from pneumonia, and it is up to Petoskey to prevent this contagious form of the grip from developing into that formidable disease. To this end the steps being taken by the authorities to prevent crowding are the best possible.

A reassuring word comes from Dr. J.W. Inches, Detroit commissioner of health, who believes that "Spanish Influenza" so far as Detroit and other Michigan cities is concerned, is largely a matter of psychology. Here is what he says:

The bacillus for influenza and grip apparently is the same as that for Spanish influenza; at least physicians have been unable to isolate any germ that would classify the disease as a new one but there is no Spanish influenza in this city and there is really nothing about the situation for anyone to get 'fussed up' over.

"People whose eyes water, whose throats are sore and parched and who have that sick all over feeling, immediately conclude they have this most recent and widely press agented disease called Spanish Influenza, but they have not."

"They are suffering from grip or influenza and as a matter of precaution should see a physician immediately, and then forget about it. Grip is not la grippe anymore and influenza has no Spanish about it. Folks are suffering from bad colds principally and if properly looked after have little to fear."

To this we might add that if Petoskey and the rest of Emmet County will calmly accept the affliction as one of those occurrences which come to every city on rare occasions, and quietly go about observing the laws of cleanliness and sanitation and avoid crowding and poorly ventilated rooms, the epidemic will pass without appreciably increasing our death rate.

Petoskey News Review
October 8, 1918

**HOSPITALS DOING STRENUOUS WORK
OVERWORKED NURSES IN LOCAL HOSPITALS**

Have 26 Epidemic Cases and 30 Others;
Girls Labor Under Severe Strain

Petoskey and Lockwood hospitals have been doing heroic work during the epidemic – not only by handling influenza and pneumonia cases but relieving distressed conditions in homes through the handling of other illnesses.

This morning Petoskey Hospital had 38 patients, 22 of whom were suffering from pneumonia or influenza. The epidemic cases at the two hospitals are reported as follows:

Petoskey – Mrs. Albert Schrader, Pete Anderson, Mrs. Milford Leach, Mrs. Isaac Rehkopf, Mrs. Ada Phelps, Miss Etha Courtney, Mrs. Herbert Barney, Mrs. C.E. Morrill, Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. W.F. Hartwick, Mrs. O. Damon, Miss Martha Burns, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Jalyick, Mrs. Lee Card, and two children, Miss Hazel Henderson, Mrs. Grandstrom, John Wilcoxon, Albert Wilhelm, and Gordon Leach. Albert Wilhelm is from Kegomic and Gordon Leach is the baby son of L.M. Leach.

Lockwood – Mrs. Alfred Johnson, Miss Brotherton, Miss Love and Mr. Gieson. Miss Love is one of the Lockwood nurses.

At Petoskey hospital four nurses were down last evening and others were ill but working. Early in the week seven were incapacitated at the same time.

With the exception of Miss Love all the Lockwood nurses are at work. Miss Stumpf, a graduate of the hospital, went there last night to work as long as needed. The Lockwood cases of all kinds number 18.

Petoskey News Review
October 16, 1918

**PETOSKEY STRUCK BY NEW EPIDEMIC
BREAKS OUT ON UPPER LIPS OF MEN**

Women Fighting it With All the Vigor They Have Been Using Against Influenza.

Following close on the heels of the scourge of influenza and pneumonia another affliction has come to Petoskey. It is breaking out on the upper lips of the male members of the genus homo and is violently contagious. The women of the city are fighting against the spread of the new epidemic with all the energy they have been using to stamp out the "flu," and are trying various treatments.

One wife cured her husband in a single day and is telling all the others how to do it. She said: "When he left the house yesterday morning locked the door behind him and told him through the window that I wouldn't let him in again until it was gone, and when he came home to supper he didn't bring it with him."

At the post office the affliction showed first on Postmaster Eugene L. Rose, and Will Ellis came down (to the office) with it a week later. Russell Hinds this morning was showing symptoms. They all blame George Wilson, with whom the trouble is chronic.

Alarming reports have been received from other offices, but the women claim they have the scourge well in hand now, although two cases in the News office have thus far resisted all treatments. A sporadic case of "sideburns" was nipped while yet in the bud.

Petoskey News Review
October 26, 1918

In spite of the ongoing battles the country was facing—WWI and the Spanish Flu—the newspaper and the community took time to poke a little fun at the men wearing mustaches. It had to be a welcome respite from the tragedies surrounding them.

**FLU GROWS WORSE IN THIS REGION
LACK OF PHYSICIANS AND NURSES FELT.**

Villages North Are Having Considerable Trouble and
Petoskey Doctors and Nurses Are Called.

Northern Michigan outside of Petoskey and Harbor Springs is being swept by another epidemic of influenza. Villages about Petoskey which escaped the other epidemic are now being swept by the disease. With no doctor between Mackinaw City and Alanson on the G.R. & I; the people are in hard straits. Dr. John Reycraft has been taking charge at Levering and Dr. G.W. Nihart at Pellston. Nurses have been sent to Pellston, Levering, Fife Lake, Boyne City, Mackinaw City and Johannesburg today and more calls are coming.

Miss Ruth March and Miss Emma Bosma are at Pellston, the latter being there as community nurse during the epidemic. Miss Clara Johnson is at Levering, Miss Hattie Samolska is at Fife Lake, Miss Christine Hastings at Boyne City, Miss Mary Hall at Mackinaw City and Miss Iona Raymond at Johannesburg.

Petoskey News Review
December 6, 1918

**HERE ARE WAYS TO PREVENT GRIP
PETOSKIANS TRY ONIONS AND LEMONADE.**

Surgeon General Gives Twelve Rules Which Are Posted at Army Cantonments

Strong lemonade with little or no sugar is being drunk in Petoskey as a preventative for grip. Also, many onions are being eaten with the same object.

Spanish influenza, now epidemic to Petoskey. And in hundreds of other localities in America is held by physicians to be largely preventable. It is said to have its origin in the mouth and throat.

Special notes of warning sounded by physicians stress the importance of proper breathing and cleanliness.

“Clean the mouth just as you would the hands,” says one. “The mouth is not clean when the teeth only are brushed. The whole mouth should be cleansed. Sterilize your toothbrush by boiling.

“Sterilize the mouth after each meal, the last thing before retiring at night, and the first thing on arising. In the perfect culture bed of the mouth germs multiply with an almost unbelievable rate.”

Here are the twelve rules that have been posted in army cantonments under direction of the surgeon general:

1. Avoid needless crowding – influenza is a crowd disease.
2. Smother your coughs and sneezes – others do not want the germs which you would throw away.
3. Your nose, not your mouth, was made to breathe through – get the habit.
4. Remember the three “C’s” – a clean mouth, clean skin and clean clothes.
5. Try to keep cool when you walk and warm when you ride and sleep.
6. Open the windows always at home at night; at the office when practicable.
7. Food will win the war if you give it a chance – help by choosing and chewing your food well.
8. Your fate may be in your own hands – wash your hands before eating.
9. Don’t let the waste product of digestion accumulate – drink a glass or two of water on getting up.
10. Don’t use a napkin, towel, spoon, fork, glass or cup which has been used by another person and not washed.
11. Avoid tight clothes, tight shoes, tight gloves – seek to make nature your ally, not your prisoner.
12. When the air is pure, breathe all of it you can – breathe deeply.

Petoskey News Review
October 8, 1918

**TENDER SCENES AT EMERGENCY
SICK NURSE RETURNS TO CARE FOR PATIENT.**

Wifeless Man and Motherless Children Come
to See "Little Sister"

The Red Cross Emergency hospital has been the scene of many affecting, and sometimes amusing, incidents during the last few days. Everything has been so clean, and the white-clad nurses so soothing and cheering to the patients, that the place hardly looks like a place where death is being fought with every weapon known to modern medicine and nursing.

The other morning a little fellow was having his face washed by his night nurse just before she was leaving for a much needed rest, and he looked earnestly up into her face and naively asked, "Did anybody die last night?"

"I Don't Want to Get Well."

A man was standing in the Red Cross office where there was a great dish of tapioca, which had been sent by a Petoskey woman for the patients, and remarked, "If I were ill here and could have food like that I'd feel like the young soldier at the base hospital who sang to the nurse, 'I don't want to get well.'"

One of the nurses became prostrated by overwork and had to be taken home. But she came back that same night and begged that she be allowed to stay. There was one of her cases that was a very bad one, she said, and there was no use of her remaining at home because she could not rest. Could she stay if she would take care of only that one patient, please? She stayed.

Visit Banishes Anxiety.

A father and his two children came to the hospital and wanted to see little sister, but little sister had been tucked in for the night and it was necessary to refuse the pleading request. The father was told to come and bring the children the next day, but he said, "I must work all day tomorrow to earn food for these." A young man standing near offered to bring them during the man's dinner hour, and they came – a wifeless man, and two motherless children – to see little sister; and, as they left the building the father said, "I am perfectly satisfied. My mind is at rest. It is a beautiful place, and I shall not worry anymore."

Petoskey Evening News
October 18, 1918